

EDITORIAL

The excellent *Quarterly Review of Biology* runs a very excellent book review department, which we read very carefully and regularly. We have often enjoyed the devastating appraisal of some book—and sometimes deprecated it. The current number carries an anonymous review (they are all anonymous, for that matter) of some bird book (which we have neither seen nor heard of previously). And the only thing about the review which caught our attention was the reviewer's impatience with verse. We must make the matter clear with the following quotation: "To the distress of the reviewer the author frequently deserts prose for verse. This is so often true of books of this type that we, as hard-boiled cynics, are tempted to suggest that some bright young person prepare a doctorate on the stimulus given poetry by ornithology (or *vice versa*)."

This at once forced us to recall that our leading article in this issue starts off with a verse. But, we reflected that Dr. Bissonnette's learned researches and contributions to experimental ornithology would protect him from any suspicion of languid sentimentality. It then happened that on the same day we opened the current issue of *Science* (Sept. 3, 1937) and found the leading article to be by Sir Edward B. Poulton, of the University of Oxford, and president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and which article contained two verse quotations. Then, without a change of date, we turned the pages of the same September *Quarterly Review*, and found the paper on the seventeen year cicada by the veteran and distinguished Professor E. A. Andrews, of Johns Hopkins University, on the first page of which and on the last page of which short verses are interpolated.

We are thus guided to the conclusion that a slight addiction to verse is not incompatible with scientific standing, even though it may be indicative of some familiarity with poetical literature and some time spent browsing therein—and hence away from the grindstone of science.

And as long as we are so close to the subject we may as well say that we have never felt very great admiration for anonymous reviews or writings of any kind—especially those with sarcastic and walloping inclinations. We can't help wondering how much of it is braggadocio, and how much punishment the bully could take before the tears would come.